Trade Pact between India and Russia

1858. SHRI SURESH KALMADI :
SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a Rs. 7,500 crores trade pact has recently been signed between India and Russian Federation continuing Rupee payments arrangements; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b) The Indo-Russian Trade Protocol for 1992 was signed on 22nd February, 1992. The protocol targets a two way rupee trade turnover of US $2200 million. The Protocol also permits transactions by way of counter-trade, barter, payments in freely convertible currency or any other internationally recognized form of business cooperation. Under the terms of the Protocol all trade transaction shall be denominated in freely convertible international currencies. A technical credit has also been permitted to the Russian Federation with an upper limit of Rs. 850 crores.

Removing the restriction from Imports

1859. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
DR. Z.A. AHMAD:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have removed almost all restrictions on imports which were imposed when there was a severe foreign exchange crunch;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) whether it is because of the confidence in the country's foreign exchange position; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (d) Import of all items other than those covered by the Negative List is allowed freely. Import of items covered by the Negative List other than those import of which is banned, will be allowed against Import Licences. Details in this regard are contained in the Ministry of Commerce Public Notice No. 278-ITC(PN)/90-93 dated 29th February, 1992 copies of which are available in the Parliament Library.

Restrictions imposed by the Reserve Bank of India in the matter of margin money and opening of Letters of Credit, etc. introduced in March, 1991 have also been gradually removed with the improvement in the balance of payment position.

The restrictions have been eased because of the improving foreign exchange position.

Decline in price of Rubber

1860. SHRI M. A. BABY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that despite the intervention of Government agency, the price of natural rubber is declining;

(b) whether this has affected the rubber growers; and

(c) what action has been taken or is proposed to be taken by Government to find solution to this problem?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) The STC has been procuring both RMA-4 and RMA-5 grades of natural rubber from the domestic market. As on 2nd March, 1992, STC has procured 8677 MTs of RMA-4 grade and 6941 MTs of RMA-5 grade of rubber from the domestic market. In addition the Kerala State Cooperative Rubber Marketing Federation is also procuring ungraded rubber from the domestic market. As on 29th February, 1992, they have procured 4103 MTs of ungraded rubber. Although in the case of RMA-4 grade and ungraded rubber, the prices showed marginal decline with ups and downs, in the case of RMA-5 grade the price has improved. STC will continue its purchase operations from the domestic market till the prices reach the desired level.

Government has also cleared export of 14,000 metric tonnes of specific grades by

growers and private parties. Besides, STC has also been permitted to export certain quantities of rubber held by them.

US warned India on Provident Protection in Patents Area

1861. SHRI BEKAL UTSAHI:

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether as reported in *National Herald* of 12th December, 1991 US has warned India to provide a measure of product protection in patents area of pharmaceuticals by 26th February, 1992 to avert retaliatory action;

(b) if so, what specific nature and extent of product protection was desired by US; and

(c) what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) Government has noted the news item which appeared in *National Herald* of 12th December, 1991. The Government has not received such a warning from the United States. However, the United States Trade Representative had designated India as a priority country and initiated investigation on 26th May, 1991 under Special 301 provisions of its trade legislation on grounds of perceived inadequacy in the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights. In particular, in the area of patents, the United States has raised the issue of scope of patentability, uniform duration of term of patents and limitations on the conditions for grant of compulsory licences. Government has drawn the attention of the United States to the fact that this issue is the subject of multilateral trade negotiations in the Uruguay Round which have yet to be concluded.

Visit of India's Trade Delegations to Republics in CIS

1862. SHRI BEKAL UTSAHI:

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether an Offical delegation was sent to Russia, recently to hold talks with individual Republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States on various issues relating to trade and commerce; and

(b) if so, what are the details of the talks with each Republic including the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) An official level delegation led by the Foreign Secretary visited Moscow in January, 1992. The delegation held discussions with the Russian Government on different bilateral issues including economic cooperation and trade relations. As a follow-up to this visit, a Russian delegation visited India in the third week of February, 1992. During this visit an Agreement on Trade and Economic cooperation was initialled and is expected to be signed in the near future. A bilateral Trade Protocol for 1992 was also concluded during this visit. Seperately Trade Agreements with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have also been concluded. Discussions have also been held with the Republics of Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Kirghizstan.

Import of Rubber by Business Houses

1863. SHRI M. A. BABY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that Indian business houses import rubber;

(b) if so, what is the quantity and break-up of rubber imported during the last six months by the business houses;

(c) whether Government of Kerala has requested the Centre to stop all sorts of imports of rubber; and

(d) if so, what steps have been taken by Government in this regard?